

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Sidney and Ethel Grier House

Charlotte vicinity, Mecklenburg County, MK2696, Listed 8/23/2006
Nomination by Stewart Gray
Photographs by Stewart Gray, April 2005



Overall view



Rear view with addition

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Grier, Sidney and Ethel, House

other names/site number _____

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2. Location

=====

street & number 4747 Grier Farm Lane not for publication n/a
city or town Charlotte vicinity X
state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119
zip code 28277

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ____ nationally ____ statewide x locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Sidney and Ethel Grier House
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register
criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the

National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the

National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date
of Action

=====

5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

_____ private

X public-local

_____ public-State

_____ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

X building(s)

_____ district

_____ site

_____ structure

_____ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

2

0

0

Noncontributing

0 buildings

0 sites

0 structures

0 0 objects
2 0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic and Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, NC

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling
DOMESTIC secondary structure

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling
DOMESTIC secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
roof ASPHALT
walls WOOD: Weatherboard
other BRICK
WOOD

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

 A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

 B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in

our past.

☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or a grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1916

Significant Dates 1916

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Fincher, Sam, builder/carpenter

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

___ previously listed in the National Register

X previously determined eligible by the National Register

___ designated a National Historic Landmark

___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

X State Historic Preservation Office

___ Other State agency

___ Federal agency

X Local government

___ University

___ Other

Name of repository: NC Office of Archives and History, Survey and Planning Branch, Raleigh; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property 2

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	521680	3879760	3	___	___
2	___	___	___	4	___	___

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Stewart Gray

organization Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks date 5-19-04

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Sidney and Ethel Grier House
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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street & number 2100 Randolph Road telephone (704) 376-9115

city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28207

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Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. Narrative Description

Built in 1916, the Sidney and Ethel Grier House is a well-preserved rural vernacular farmhouse featuring a blend of Craftsman and Victorian design elements. The Sidney and Ethel Grier House is located on a low rise, set back on a two-acre lot about one hundred and fifty feet from Grier Farm Lane in southern Mecklenburg County. The property was once part of the large landholdings of the Grier Family, who farmed in southern Mecklenburg County for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The area is now characterized by modern suburban residential development. Surviving elements of the 1916 farm include the hipped-roof farmhouse and a nearby wellhouse.

Originally the Sidney and Ethel Grier House sat on a rural farm, accessed by a long driveway off of Tilley-Morris Road, with fields to the east and west of the driveway. Much of those former fields, like most of the neighborhood, is now occupied by closely-spaced new homes. But in contrast to the new housing, the Sidney and Ethel Grier House is still evocative of the area's rural history. The house and wellhouse on their large lot are relatively isolated from the new neighborhood subdivision. The house faces north, and is located in a small grove of mature oak trees in the southwest corner of the property. Included in the two-acre lot is a one-and-a-half-acre field that wraps around the grove to the north and the east, contrasting greatly with the intensive development and small lots of the surrounding neighborhood. The large trees along the rear of the property, as well as a line of oaks and pines to the east of the farmhouse help screen the house site from the new development. (Interview with Nancy Grier Miller 2002)

The one-story frame bungalow is in very good condition and retains a very high degree of integrity in regards to its original design and materials. The house is five bays wide, and was originally three rooms deep. A recent one-room-deep one-and-one-half-story addition has been added to the rear of the house. The entire house is sheltered by a high compound hip roof.

The most notable architectural feature of the house is its wraparound recessed porch, supported by eight Craftsman style tapered half-posts on tall brick piers. The posts are crowned with molding, molded trim also decorates the porch beams, and the ceiling features beaded board. The porch was originally bounded by a handrail with square pickets. The side sections of the porch terminate in entrances into the second row of rooms in this massed-plan house. (Interview with Nancy Grier Miller 2002)

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The house was built on brick piers. Brick curtain walls have been added between the piers, but the curtain walls are set back and have been painted black to emphasize the pier construction.

The front elevation is three bays wide, with the original front door centered between three-over-two double-hung sash windows. These three-over-two windows are also found on the east and west elevations and appear to be a merger of the three-over-one window typical of Craftsman bungalows, with a two-over-two or one-over-one Queen Anne window. The Queen Anne style front door contains a single large plate-glass light above a single wooden panel. The door's architrave trim is fluted, with decorative starter blocks bearing bull's-eyes. This door trim is also used in the interior of the house. Window trim is limited to a decorative drip edge crowning the head trim. The walls feature crown trim and moulded corner boards. The two doors off the sides of the porch give the house a total width of five bays. These secondary doors have the same architrave trim found around the central front entrance, but the doors have three horizontal panels and feature dentil trim under a single plate-glass light.

The house's clapboard siding was nailed directly to the studs, without employing any type of sheathing. The hipped roof over the principal section of the house has a very short ridgeline parallel to the front elevation. A generous eave overhang protects the house, which may be partly responsible for the generally good condition of the Grier House's woodwork. Supporting the overhangs are exposed rafter tails that were cut with a decorative cove and rounded on the ends. The edge of the exposed roof sheathing is capped with copper. A low but prominent hipped-roof dormer is centered over the recessed porch. Wooden louvered vents flank a long rectangular six-light sash.

Another significant feature of the house is a shallow three-sided cut-away bay under a small gable on the west side of the house. The small gable is decorated with simple triangular brackets and boards sawn at the ends to suggest decorative rafter ends. The bay and gable disrupt the generally symmetrical layout of the house. On the east side of the house, opposite the west side bay, two three-over-two windows are paired. Just past these windows, and just beyond the bay on the east side, the front section of the house ends.

Set back slightly from the east and west elevations of the front section, a hipped-roof wing extends from the rear of the principal section. The original rear wing was one room deep and featured a single three-over-two window on the east elevation. A ca. 1940 short

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replacement three-over-two window on the west elevation allowed for the installation of an indoor sink. A low, hipped-roof addition that may have incorporated sections of an earlier rear porch was removed in 2003. Also in 2003, the rear wing was extended approximately ten feet. The east and west elevations of this new section are blank. The addition features exposed rafter tails and a brick pier foundation, with recessed curtain walls. To differentiate the old from the new construction, the reveal of the siding was increased and original corner boards were left in place to mark the beginning of the new addition. The rear elevation of the addition is pierced by four short double-hung windows that are well differentiated from the three-over-two windows found on the rest of the house. Double single-light doors are centered in the rear elevation and are approached by wooden steps. A gabled dormer containing two small windows is centered above the rear entrance.

The interior of the house retains a high degree of integrity. The original pine floors are in good condition and the original plaster walls are intact. The many interior doorways retain simple post and lintel surrounds topped with moulded trim and horizontal panel doors with original hardware. Generous base and crown trim is still intact. Many rooms feature original beaded-board ceilings, and the front bedroom has retained its original picture moulding. The house features two elaborate mantelpieces, one in the front bedroom and another in the parlor. Both are painted and feature an overmantel with a large mirror, and decorative classical columns supporting an upper shelf. In the bedroom the columns run between the two shelves, while in the parlor they run unbroken to an upper shelf. A small ceramic tile hearth is set into the floor in the parlor. The hearths in the other rooms are brick with a smooth coat of stucco. The kitchen features a built-in corner cupboard with tall and narrow six-light doors.

Major interior alterations are limited to a short central rear hallway, where the ceiling directly below the new rear dormer was removed to allow for the construction of a stairway from the new section of the rear wing to a bedroom in the former attic. New bathrooms in the new rear section replace a single bathroom that had been constructed on the east side of the wraparound porch around 1940.

A ca. 1916 front-gabled well house sits close to the southwest corner of the rear addition. Cedar tree trunks were used as posts to support a small porch that protects the wooden well surround.

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Section 8: Statement of Significance

Summary

Built in 1916, the Sidney and Ethel Grier House is among the best preserved and most architecturally significant of the few surviving examples of early-twentieth century farmhouse architecture in the once agricultural but now largely suburban and urban southern section of Mecklenburg County. Featuring a combination of the Queen Anne and Craftsman elements, the Sidney and Ethel Grier House epitomizes the late emergence of popular architecture in the Mecklenburg County countryside and can be viewed as symbolic of the county's short-lived cotton-related prosperity. Remaining in a lot large enough to convey the historic rural nature of the property, the farmhouse and its accompanying wellhouse are locally significant for the National Register under Criterion C for architecture.

Architectural context supplemented in this nomination may be found in the "Historic and Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1990, Post-Bellum and Late nineteenth to Early Twentieth-Century Agriculture (1865-1939), Pages E9-14. The Grier House property is associated with property type I.D, "Houses: Early Twentieth-Century Small-Town Dwellings and Farmhouses -- Eclectic style dwellings, Pages F12-14; and Type II.C, "Outbuildings: Smokehouses, Chicken Coops, Wellhouses", Pages F24-26. Both the house and wellhouse meet the registration requirements (Page F21 and 26) as they both retain the distinctive characteristics of the building types, and their integrity is very good.

Historical Background

Sidney Grier was a member of a prominent and prosperous family that farmed large tracts of land in the Providence Township of southern Mecklenburg County. Sidney's grandfather was E.C. Grier (1820-1885), who traded in land and slaves before the Civil War. After the war, E.C. Grier operated a large farm on 560 acres in the Providence community, employing forty-seven black tenants. Sidney's father, Julius Solomon Grier (1851-1910), acquired more than 360 acres of farmland in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and was very active in financing other farmers through crop liens. Sidney was born into this industrious family in 1879. He was the fifth of thirteen children and grew up on property that was later to be part of his own

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farm. (Gray and Stathakis 2002; Interview with Nancy Grier Miller 2004; Burial Records, Providence Presbyterian Church, Charlotte)

Sidney Grier married Ethel Hudson (1881-1962), and they had six children, including sons Gerald (1906-1974) and Michael (1910-1940.) After his father's death in 1910, Sidney inherited farmland near Providence Road and employed Sam Fincher, a professional carpenter who lived in the Providence community, to build a frame bungalow farmhouse. Sidney grew cotton as well as corn, wheat, and cane. Michael Grier worked on the farm until his early death in 1940. (Interview with Nancy Grier Miller 2004; Interview with Herbert Fincher 2004; Burial Records, Providence Presbyterian Church, Charlotte)

After his brother's death, Gerald Grier, with his wife Florence, moved back home to work on the farm. With Sidney Grier's death in 1944, Gerald took over operation of the farm and continued to grow cotton. He employed black tenants, who lived in three tenant houses scattered across the property, and used a combination of tractor and mule power for plowing, cultivating, harvesting, and hauling. In the mid-1950s, Gerald took advantage of a federal Soil Bank program that paid him annually to discontinue cotton production. Gerald, however, did not scale back the farming operation. Instead, he began to concentrate on livestock production, raising beef cow and swine. He also raised calves for local dairies. Much of the land was cultivated for grain production to feed the livestock. (Interview with Nancy Grier Miller 2004; Soil and Water Conservation Society)

With the passing of Ethel Grier in 1962 and the division of the land among the surviving children, Gerald was forced to scale back his farming operations. Again, he adapted to the changing situation and this time began truck farming watermelons and cantaloupes for sale to grocers in Charlotte. He also opened the first pick-your-own strawberry field in the area. After Gerald Grier died in 1974, the fields around the farmhouse were leased to farmers who grew soybeans, corn, and wheat until 2000, when the Grier family decided to put the property up for sale. Two acres of the farm, including the house and wellhouse and a portion of an adjoining field, were purchased by the Charlotte-Historic Landmarks Commission in 2002. (Interview with Nancy Grier Miller 2004)

Architectural Context

A 1997 survey of Mecklenburg County's historic rural resources

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conducted by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission identified 219 significant properties built before 1950. Of these, only eleven were one- or one-and-one-half-story early-twentieth-century farmhouses, at least one of which has since been demolished. Out of that small group, the Sidney and Ethel Grier House is one of only five bungalow farmhouses. These five bungalows are scattered across the county, with the closest being the Fincher Farmhouse on McKee Road. Located approximately two miles to the northeast, the side-gabled Fincher Farmhouse is a fine rural example of the Craftsman style bungalow, but it exhibits none of the Queen Anne elements found on the Sidney and Ethel Grier House. (Joines and Morrill, 1997)

The house's architecture combines the up-to-date Craftsman style and the decorative asymmetry of Victorian-era house design. The Craftsman features are evident in the distinctive recessed wraparound front porch supported by tapered half-posts on tall brick piers, the hip roofed dormers, and vertical paned Craftsman windows. The three-sided cutaway bay on the west side of the house, and entrance door surround with stylized fluting and bull's eye starter blocks are indicative of Victorian-era design. The roof gable of the bay is decorated with simple Craftsman knee braces and boards sawn at the ends to suggest decorative rafter ends. The house possesses a high degree of integrity, with the significant interior and exterior architectural features essentially intact. The farmhouse's interior and exterior woodwork well represents the skilled workmanship of an early twentieth-century professional carpenter able to produce features such as tapered posts and shaped rafter tails on site, while incorporating commercially available millwork into the design of the house.

The contemporary wellhouse is an excellent example of this now-rare building type in rural Mecklenburg County. It is a small, frame gable-front structure, with an open area sheltering the wellhead, and an enclosed room for cool storage of dairy products or all-purposes storage. Bark-stripped tree trunks, which may be replacement posts, support the projecting gable roof.

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Bibliography

Burial Records, Providence Presbyterian Church, Charlotte.

Interview with Herbert Fincher 2004. Notes from the interview are on file in the Designation File for the Sidney and Ethel Grier House located in the office of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte.

Interview with Nancy Grier Miller 2004. Notes from the interview are on file in the Designation File for the Sidney and Ethel Grier House located in the office of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte.

Gray, Stewart, and Dr. Paula M. Stathakis "Survey and Research Report for the Sidney and Ethel Grier House." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 2002. On file in the office of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte.

Joines, Sherry J., and Dr. Dan L. Morrill, "Historic Rural Resources in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1997. On file in the office of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte.

Mattson, Richard L., and William Huffman. "Historic and Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. 1990. On file at the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

"100 Years of Soil & Water Conservation," fact sheet, Soil and Water Conservation Society, Ankeny, IA.

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of Mecklenburg County tax parcel 23104516.

Boundary Justification

The nominated tract is the original site of the Sidney and Ethel Grier House and includes two acres of the farm associated with the house. The two-acre tract provides a historically appropriate setting for the house.